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Sermon for Whitsunday.

JOHN 14, 23—31.

The day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Easter, commemorates a special event in the history of the Church, namely, the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples of Christ as it took place nearly 1900 years ago. The Epistle lesson for the day describes the event, while the Gospel lesson merely tells us of the Holy Spirit and His work. The words here recorded were spoken by the Savior a short time before His suffering and death, spoken for the comfort of His disciples. It is not difficult to imagine the sorrow and dismay of His followers when Jesus made to them the announcement that He must leave them and go to His Father. They were, after all, only men, and few in number. Christ had been their best friend, their teacher, guide, and protector. Nevertheless, there was no valid reason for any sorrow on their part, for the Savior had made it clear to them that it was God's will that He should leave them, by saying, "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." He was to leave this world, to suffer and die, in order that He might redeem them and us. Moreover, He had also said to them, "I go away, and come again unto you." Finally, He had promised to send them another Comforter. In view of all this they had no reason to fear that they would be forsaken.

Now we are much in the same position that these disciples were in. We have never beheld the Savior with our eyes, but we know that His bodily presence is not necessary for us. But does not our reason at times tempt us to doubt whether He is present among us at all? And yet we are in no wise at a disadvantage in comparison with the disciples. The promises given to them are also meant for us. To-day we have occasion to consider especially the one relating to the Comforter, as found in our Gospel lesson. Permit me, then, to speak to you on

THE SENDING OF THE COMFORTER,

showing

- I. *Who that Comforter is.*
- II. *How He is sent.*
- III. *For what purpose He is sent.*

I.

We read in the 26th verse of our text, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things." We learn, then, that this Comforter is none other than the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. He is therefore true God, coequal with the Father and the Son, but distinct in person. This truth is plainly taught in Holy Writ, but it has often been denied. There have been, and still are, those who will not believe that God is one in essence and yet three in persons. They may use the words, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," but they reject the doctrine contained therein. They maintain that there is one God, and that He merely manifests Himself, now as the Father, again as the Son, and still again as the Holy Ghost. We call them Antitrinitarians, because they deny the Trinity. Now we may be as little able as they to understand the mystery of the Trinity, but we can and should accept the statements of Scripture concerning it. We are told in our text that the Father will send us the Comforter, and that He will send Him in the name of Christ. Three distinct persons are mentioned. In the same chapter from which our text is taken, in verse 16, the Savior says, "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." Thus, again, we learn that the Holy Spirit is another, a distinct person.

Again, we must hold fast to the doctrine revealed in Scripture that the Spirit is no less God than the Father and the Son, even though He is said to proceed from them. We have occasion to consider this question here, because the Savior says in verse 28, "My Father is greater than I." These words have been misused to show that the Son is subordinate to the Father, therefore inferior to Him. And we are then asked to draw the conclusion that the Holy Spirit must also be inferior to the Father. No such doctrine, however, is to be drawn from these words. To understand them rightly, we need only compare them with the numerous other passages speaking of Christ. The meaning of them is this: Although He possessed the same divine majesty and power as the Father, He did not make full use thereof during His State of Humiliation. He humbled Himself freely for our sakes, and became obedient unto death, even the

death of the cross. Thus, for a time He appeared unto men as being inferior to the Father. But as soon as He had finished His work, He again made full use of the power which He had always possessed. If Christ possessed divine power and majesty even during His humiliation, then it must be granted that He is equal with the Father. And so Scripture teaches us.

As regards the Holy Spirit, it was maintained 1500 years ago that He was a creature and not of the same divine essence with the Father and the Son. The Church condemned this heresy, and in the Nicene Creed added these words to show her position: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets." Scripture assures us repeatedly that the Holy Spirit is also true God. When Ananias and Sapphira had kept back a part of their possessions, intending to leave the Apostle under the impression that they had brought everything, St. Peter said to Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."—This whole question has a direct bearing on our theme, since the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, can come to us, and perform what is here said of Him, only if, and because, He is true God.

II.

But how is the Holy Spirit sent to us?

He was sent down upon the apostles only a short time after the promise of our text had been given them, in a miraculous manner. When they were assembled on the day of Pentecost, "there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Such is the record as found in our Epistle lesson. But that occurrence does not cover the promise of our text. We are not to look for a like manifestation; we have no promise that the Holy Spirit will ever descend upon us in the same manner. This outpouring occurred but once, and for a special purpose, namely, in order that the Church might gain a strong hold upon men, when they saw that her God was with her. But the promise regarding the sending of the Comforter holds good for all time. The "other Comforter" is not simply to come, but to abide with us forever. And although He does not come down in a visible form, He, nevertheless, enters the hearts of men in an invisible manner.

But how is this possible? We have been taught and believe that God deals with us only through certain external means. That means is His Word. Whatever God wants to tell us, or to bestow upon us, He does by means of the Word. By means of and in this same Word the Spirit also comes to us. We may gather this from the first verse of our text: "If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." It is evident, from all that has been said, that the Father and the Son will dwell only where the Spirit also takes up His abode, and that is in the hearts of believers, for they are the only ones who love Christ and keep His words. When the question is asked, "How does He dwell in their hearts?" the answer again is, By means of the Word. By means of the Word He enters and takes possession of man's heart in his conversion. It would be useless to argue that the Word is nothing but a dead letter, and that the Spirit, by His almighty power, can also enter man's heart without it. God's Word is a living power, and He binds us to it as the means by which He will communicate with us. Those who maintain that they have been moved by the Spirit independently of the Word, perhaps in a dream or vision, are simply deluding themselves. Whoever ignores the Word also rejects the Holy Spirit. The Savior explicitly says: "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." We have the right to conclude that in such a man's heart the Holy Spirit, and the whole Trinity, will not dwell. He may have learned God's Word, and still be without God in the world. The fact, also, that the Spirit has once entered does not mean that He must remain in spite of indifference and unbelief. He remains only as long as the Word remains. If we reject this means, we voluntarily drive Him from us. You, beloved hearers, have often been exhorted to hear and accept this Word, to make it your rule of life. You can see now why such admonitions are necessary. By means of the Word only is the Spirit sent to you day after day, and by and through it alone can you be and remain temples of the Triune God; thus, and thus only, can the Spirit perform His work in you. And what is that work? For what purpose is the Spirit sent to us?

III.

This may be seen in part from the name that is here given the Holy Spirit. He is called the Paraclete, or the Comforter, since He is always present with the believer, ready to guide and to comfort him. His work is spoken of more specifically in the 26th verse: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remem-

brance, whatsoever I have said unto you." While the Savior was present with His disciples, He had taught them, as stated in the 25th verse. He had revealed to them their weaknesses and had warned them concerning the temptations and trials which were in store for them. But at the time of His leaving them they were still weak, and He foresaw that they would still be in need of being taught and reminded after He was taken from them.

Now the Holy Spirit is to continue this work; He is to be another Teacher as well as Comforter, not for the disciples only, but for all believers, in all ages. The Holy Spirit now enlightens our darkened understanding, so that we can grasp the meaning of Christ's words. There were many words of the Savior which the disciples had not understood while He was with them; others they had forgotten. Later, however, the Comforter revealed to them the meaning of Jesus' words, and recalled to their mind what had escaped them for a time. Every Christian has experienced something of this work of the Spirit. He has, perhaps, derived comfort from some Scripture passage, and then allowed the words to slip from him. Or, he reads, but cannot get at the meaning of the words. Later on he will frequently find that, though forgotten for a time, these words have come to mind again, and what was dark before has now become perfectly clear. That is the work of the Spirit. It is through His teaching that the Christian grows in grace and knowledge. He it is, furthermore, that moves us to pray, instilling the desire to do so into our hearts and putting the words on our lips. He reminds us of all that Christ has done for us.

Finally, in the 27th verse, the Savior promises His disciples peace: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Yes, outwardly the disciples of Christ are troubled in this world. But as long as the Spirit lives in their hearts they have peace inwardly, a better peace than this world can ever offer them, the blessed peace of God which passeth all understanding. And thus, throughout their whole life, the Spirit continues His work in the hearts of believers, teaching, exhorting, reminding, and comforting them. When their last hour has come, He also takes them by the hand, and, through the power of His Word, leads them safely through the valley of the shadow of death. Blessed, therefore, is the man in whose heart He dwells. No doubt we have often grieved Him by our indifference and waywardness. God grant us grace to do so no more, and keep us steadfast in His Word. Amen.

C. A. W.

Communion Address on 1 Cor. 11, 23—29.

These precious verses contain St. Paul's account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, the very subject to be considered by those who would prepare for a worthy reception of the holy Sacrament. Well would it have been for the Church if men had not departed from St. Paul's simple and plain statement concerning the Holy Supper. It is a mournful fact that the words of institution have been greatly corrupted by false explanations and superstitious additions and subtractions, until the real and original meaning of the sacramentary words, in the most parts of Christendom, are utterly unknown, so that many trifle with the holy Sacrament. — Our, or rather Christ's opponents, who wickedly add unto, or take away from, the words of institution claim that they cherish the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the highest value. They also celebrate it with great pomp and ambitious display, but by their false and unscriptural doctrine they clearly prove that they do not cherish the Holy Supper as a treasure of the greatest value. True Lutherans cherish and value the Holy Supper highly. They also prove and show their high admiration and estimation in words and deeds. — In order to assist you in the preparation for a blessed reception of the holy Sacrament, let me, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, show you:—

THAT TRUE LUTHERANS VALUE THE LORD'S SUPPER HIGHLY.

I.

Notice, in the first place, why true Lutherans value the Lord's Supper highly. They do it, above all, on account of its Author or Institutor. Who instituted the Holy Supper? St. Paul says, "I have received it from the Lord." From this we learn that the Lord's Supper is no human ordinance or invention. It was not instituted by men, but by our Lord Jesus Himself. It is a divine ordinance. God alone can institute a sacrament. Man cannot make a sacrament, no matter who he is, whether priest, bishop, or pope. God alone is the Author of every true sacrament. God, our Lord Jesus, is the Author of the Sacrament of the Altar. Christ Jesus, the Author of the Holy Supper, is true Man, and true God: true man, that He might be capable of giving us His body and blood in the Holy Supper; true God, that He might be sufficient to fulfill His great promise and word: "This is my body; this is my blood." Christ Jesus, the Author of the Holy Supper, is also infinitely true, wise, and powerful. Let this consideration move you to value this sacrament highly.

True Lutherans, furthermore, cherish the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the highest value on account of its heavenly gift. Which is this heavenly gift? In, with, and under the bread Christ Jesus gives us that true and natural human body which was received into the person of the Son of God, and which was given into the painful and shameful death of the cross for us and our sins. In, with, and under the wine Christ gives us that true and natural blood which was shed upon the cross for the remission of our sins. It is the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, which cleanseth us from all sins, 1 John 1, 7. It is true, we cannot understand how this is possible, neither can we see with our eyes, nor feel with our fingers, that the body and blood of Christ Jesus are really present in the Holy Supper. *Nevertheless we believe it.*

But who receives this heavenly gift, the body and blood of Christ, in, with, and under the bread and wine? Answer: All communicants, worthy and unworthy, believers and unbelievers, pious and wicked, vv. 28. 29. Whosoever partakes of the Holy Supper receives the body and blood of Christ Jesus, whether it be Peter or Judas. Christ Jesus says to all that gather about His table: "Take, eat, this is my body; take, drink, this is my blood." This heavenly gift is a constituent part of the Holy Sacrament. Every guest or communicant receives the whole sacrament, namely, the true and natural body and blood of Christ. And on account of this heavenly gift we Lutherans cherish the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the highest value!

We do this, finally, on account of the unspeakable benefit accruing to us from the Lord's Supper. What is the benefit of the Holy Supper? "That is shown us by these words, 'Given and shed for you for the remission of sins;' namely, that in the sacrament forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation are given us through these words," the forgiveness of all our sins, original sin and actual sins, past sins and present sins. This should induce us to honor, serve, and praise Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior, who not only suffered and died for us, but also gives us, as food and nourishment of our souls, His holy body and precious blood. This should and, indeed, does encourage and prompt all true Christians to cherish the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the greatest and highest value.

But, you ask, who receives this great benefit accruing from the Lord's Supper? Though each and everyone to whom the Holy Sacrament is administered according to Christ's institution receives the body and blood of Christ, only he receives the benefit, that is, forgiveness of sins, who believes the words of Christ, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins." Are you among those

who receive this benefit? Do you firmly believe the words of Christ, "Given and shed for you for the remission of sins"? Do you cherish the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the highest value? Then prove it!

II.

How do true Lutherans prove that they value the Lord's Supper highly? They do it, in the first place, by taking the words of the testament and institution, "This is my body; this is my blood," in their proper sense, and not figuratively. The words of the institution of the Lord's Supper are not obscure, but they are so plain, so clear, and so simple, that they could not be plainer, clearer, and simpler. Therefore we Lutherans take the words of institution in their original sense, literally, and just as they read. Again, the words of institution are the *testamentary* words of the dying Son of God, and therefore we Lutherans take them in their original sense, thus proving that we cherish the Sacrament of the Altar as a treasure of the greatest value.

We do this, in the second place, by rejecting every false and unscriptural doctrine concerning the Holy Supper. We reject the false and disgraceful doctrine of those who take the words of Christ, "This is my body; this is my blood," in a figurative sense, so as to make them read, This bread represents, signifies my body; and this wine represents my blood. We claim that no man, no, not even an angel, has authority to change Christ's testamentary words. If we cannot rely upon the clear testamentary words of the dying Son of God, there is no longer any word of God in the Bible upon which we can firmly rely. If Christ's testamentary words, "This is my body; this is my blood," no longer stand firm, no word of Christ stands firm! And if we may depart from the clear and simple testamentary words of Christ, simply because they do not harmonize with our perverted reason, we may depart from every word of Christ which seems incomprehensible to us. And that will never do!

We also reject the false and unscriptural doctrine of those who claim and teach that the substance of the bread and wine in the Holy Supper is *changed* into the body and blood of Christ. 1 Cor. 10, 6 St. Paul expressly teaches that while the Lord's Supper is being partaken of the bread is still bread and the wine is still wine. We also reject the wicked doctrine of those who deny the cup to the lay members of the church. Christ Jesus, the Institutor of the Holy Sacrament, particularly said in regard to the cup, "Drink ye *all* of it," Matt. 26, 27. And St. Mark expressly states that they *all* drank of it, Mark 14, 23. The objection is made that the apostles *all* drank of the wine as apostles and not as laymen. But how will

or can our opponents ever prove that the apostles drank in the capacity of apostles? Besides, the words of St. Paul in our text, "As often as ye eat this bread *and drink this cup*," are addressed to the local congregation at large. To the members of the congregation, as many as are able to examine themselves, and are known to be one with the congregation in the profession of true discipleship and in godliness of life, the Holy Sacrament, whole and entire, may and should be administered. Undoubtedly the Corinthians were laymen—not all apostles.

In the third place, we Lutherans receive the Lord's Supper often, and in this way also prove that we value the Lord's Supper highly. St. Paul says, "As *oft* as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." And Christ, our Lord and Savior, says, "This do ye, as *oft* as ye drink it, in remembrance of me." From this it is clear that the Lord's Supper should be received *often*. Therefore, whosoever refuses to comply with this plain command of the Lord proves that he does not value the Lord's Supper highly. He clearly shows that he makes light of this Sacrament. "Such people," says Luther, "are surely possessed of the devil." Again, he who receives the Lord's Supper often and in true faith proves (humanly speaking) that he cherishes the Holy Supper as a treasure of the greatest value.

And this we finally do by carefully examining ourselves before we partake of the Lord's Supper. St. Paul expressly says: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." "To examine one's self," says Luther, "means to consider well in what condition we are. If we find that our hearts are hardened, that we are not willing to refrain from sin, then we may well conclude that we should not go to the holy Sacrament; for we are then no Christians. The best thing we could and should do, under such circumstances, is to put a stop to such wickedness, to repent, to trust faithfully in the promise and mercy of God, and to unite again with Christians in the participation of the Lord's Supper." If, however, we are not willing to do this, we ought not go to the Holy Supper; for thus and then we would show our great disregard and would surely eat and drink damnation there. Whosoever comes to the Lord's Table as a poor sinner does not only prove that he cherishes the Lord's Supper as a treasure of the greatest value, but he is worthy and well prepared; nor will he eat and drink damnation to himself; but he will receive Christ's body and blood worthily, unto his soul's salvation.

May God grant you all this blessing through His Holy Ghost, for the sake of Christ Jesus, His Son, our Redeemer. Amen.

J. C. A.

Funeral Sermon on Phil. 1, 21.

IN CHRIST JESUS, OUR RESURRECTED SAVIOR, DEARLY BELOVED
MOURNERS AND FRIENDS:—

One less at home!
The loved circle broken; a dear face
Missed day by day from its accustomed place;
But—cleansed and saved and perfected by grace,
One more in heaven!

One less on earth,
Its pain, its sorrow, and its toil to share.
One less the pilgrim's daily cross to bear;
One more the crown of ransomed souls to wear—
At home in heaven!

These words are peculiarly appropriate for this hour and this occasion. There is one less in the home—the home has felt and will feel that, for she was one that will be missed in the home. There is one less on earth—her friends, especially her friends in our congregation, will feel that, for she was a member and friend whose presence was a joy and whose going away cannot be unheeded. But though this is true, and we all say it with a deep painful feeling of our loss, “One less here among us,” yet we may joyfully and hopefully add, “One more in heaven.” If the family circle on earth is broken, the great gathering above with the Redeemer has gained; if the church militant here on earth has lost one of its members, the church triumphant in heaven has gained one. This is no mere sentiment. No doubt it is true that many speakers at funerals permit themselves to be influenced rather by the sentiments of sympathy with the bereaved than by zeal for the glory of God and the true weal of their hearers. But here, and speaking of her, we do not fear to say too much when we express our confidence that she has been added to the saints made perfect in light, for she belonged to those who could say with St. Paul,

“FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.”

To the glory of God and for your consolation let us answer these two questions:

- I. *Who can truthfully say: “To me to live is Christ”?*
- II. *What is their gain in dying?*

I.

St. Paul declared: “For to me to live is Christ.” What did he mean by that? St. Paul had been dead and cold toward Christ and Christ's Gospel, yea, he had been a bitter enemy of Jesus Christ; he had waged a relentless warfare against all who called upon Jesus. But the very Savior whom Paul hated loved Paul. Jesus, the good

Shepherd, sought this lost sheep of the house of Israel and found it. While on his way to Damascus to persecute Christians, Jesus appeared to Paul and talked with him. That meeting with the resurrected Savior and the instruction which he received later from a minister of the Gospel changed Paul from an enemy of Christ to a believer in Christ and in Christ's Word. Paul had been dead in trespasses and sins while he thought himself holy and righteous before God, but now he saw his own sin and the only Savior from sin, Jesus, the Messiah of Israel. Now he saw that his own righteousnesses were but as filthy rags, and that Christ alone gives us that righteousness which is valid before God. He believed now that faithful saying "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Paul did not consider himself righteous any longer by his own works, but singled himself out as the chief of sinners. But he also trusted that Savior who can save unto the uttermost even the chief of sinners. That was his new spiritual life, that he believed in the Christ of God, the Savior of sinners. This faith produced in him a devoted gratitude to that Savior who had become a curse for him and redeemed him from the curse of the Law. Because Jesus had loved him and died for him while Paul was an enemy of God, Paul now loved Jesus and devoted his life to the glory and service of Jesus. His whole life after his conversion was a continued service to Christ. To him to live was Christ, that means, Paul's true inner spiritual life came from Christ, fed upon Christ, and was devoted to Christ. Christ lived in him, he lived in Christ, Christ was his all in all. To him to live was Christ. Whoever knows the life of the apostle after his conversion knows that Paul spoke the truth when he said, "To me to live is Christ."

But dare anyone else say the same, "To me to live is Christ"? Certainly, every true Christian dare say that. Christ was not Paul's life because Paul was an apostle, but because Paul was a Christian. The faith which Paul had is the same faith which every Christian has. Every true Christian believes that faithful word, worthy of all acceptance, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and: "I have obtained mercy." A true Christian does not dishonestly deny his guilt or cover his sin, but confesses his transgressions before God and calls upon God for mercy. "God be merciful to me a sinner!" is the prayer of the Christian, and trusting to this mercy of God in Christ he rejoices in the forgiveness of sins and in the unmerited favor of God. Therefore he says and dares say joyfully, "To me to live is Christ." Christ is my life, my joy, my hope. Such a Christian will then also live under Christ in His kingdom and serve his Redeemer as his Lord and Master in righteousness and faithfulness.

Such a one was she who sleeps here. Not only late in life, like St. Paul, but from her youth she could say, "To me to live is Christ." Under the gracious providence of God she had been born in a Christian family and reared in a Lutheran home. In the very first years of her life she learned to know the good Shepherd, she believed in Him, she loved Him, and the older she grew the more positively she confessed Jesus Christ as her Lord who had redeemed her, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won her from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. In the Lutheran school and church which she attended this faith was nurtured and strengthened. She learned to live under Christ as her King. It was her joy to serve Him wherever she could. And she found many an opportunity to prove her devotion. God had endowed her with natural gifts and talent. She received a good education in literature and music. But far from using her advantages for her own selfish advancement she rather offered them up in her Lord's service. For some time she officiated as the organist of her home church and also taught in the school of the parish where she had received her religious training. So devoted was she to this work, and so successful in her endeavors, that upon her wedding day the whole school honored her, and each child personally congratulated their beloved teacher and wished her God's richest blessings.

And when, by God's providence, she had met, loved, and wedded the man who chose her to be his wife, she again showed that to her to live was Christ. She who had in single life served her Lord continued His faithful servant as wife and mother. For twenty-five years she practiced what she had learned from her Master's word: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church." She knew that in serving, honoring, and helping her husband she really served Christ. It was her joy to cheer and comfort, to aid and please the man whom God had given her to be her lord. That is the testimony of her bereaved and grief-stricken husband, that is the testimony of all who were privileged to observe her home life. She was a loving, dutiful, devoted wife. The heart of her husband could safely trust in her, Prov. 31, 11.

And in the same manner she labored for her children. In sickness and in health she was the untiring loving mother who cared for and nursed her children. Especially their souls' welfare was the object of her concern. Ah, the kind, patient mother, how she prayed for you and with you, dear children! How often you listened to her with rapt attention as she taught you the Bible history and

the Catechism! Indeed, my dear children, God gave you a great gift, a refined, well-educated, and, above all, a Christian mother. Never forget her, and never forget that which made her the good mother she was, namely, her faith in Jesus Christ, her Savior. 'Tis true, she was naturally also richly endowed with gifts and graces, but her true worth was due to the fact that all her gifts were purified by the grace of God and consecrated to Christ's service. Remember how on the day of your Confirmation she spoke to you of the one thing that is needful. With longing she looked forward also this year to the day when her son was to repeat and confirm his baptismal covenant. God did not grant her to see and hear that, but let us pray God that He may grant her to be reunited at last with this her son and with all her children before her Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Indeed she could say, "To me to live is Christ." In her last illness this was no more apparent than at other times. She simply showed there again what was the life of her soul, her joy and her hope. To have her pastor come and gather all the family in prayer about her bed, that was her greatest delight. She was always ready to hear God's Word and to pray. She once more received the blessed Sacrament. She would gladly have lived on and served her Lord here, but when she saw that it was God's will to remove her from this earth she resigned herself to the will of God and prayed, "Thy will be done." What a beautiful life it is, what a peaceful death, the life and death of one who can say, "To me to live is Christ." In the midst of your tears you may rejoice and praise God, for as she could say, "To me to live is Christ," so she could add, "And to die is gain."

II.

But *what is her gain in dying?* St. Paul was sure that to him to die was gain, for he declared, "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ; which is far better." How great that gain really is St. Paul points out when he who suffered so much cried out, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." That filled him with the triumphant joy of anticipation and caused him to utter those memorable words wherein he defies death and the grave: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . But thanks be to God that giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." And these words are not too strong. The gain of the Christian in dying is so great that human words cannot describe, but can only faintly indicate it. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." When the Christian dies, he is delivered

from all evil. Then God fulfills what every Christian has so often prayed, "Deliver us from evil." When we are with the Lord all ills and all evils are forever banished from us. Not only are they gone, but there is no fear that they shall ever return. "They shall rest from their labor." Sweet rest from all toil, labor, and striving will be theirs. In Abraham's bosom rest will soothe the weary pilgrim. They shall see Christ face to face. They shall live in the company of the saints made perfect. And not the imperfect and short joys of this earth, but fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore shall then be their part. Do you marvel that Paul cried out, "I have a desire to depart"? Do you marvel that Christians sing:

For me to live is Jesus,
To die is gain for me,
To Him I gladly yield me,
And die right cheerfully?

No, Christians have good reason to speak thus, for though the ungodly world goes into death with fear and trembling, as the prisoner to the gallows, the Christian looks upon death with triumphant joy, for he is going to take possession and enter into the full enjoyment of that priceless inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, which is reserved in heaven for them. By death the Christian leaves the state of his humiliation to receive honor and glory, a crown and a throne that is indisputable, for the most high God giveth it to him. By death the Christian leaves this world of woe to join the praise chorus of heaven.

Who, who would live away, away from his God?
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns.

See, my beloved, such is the gain of your dear wife, mother, and sister in dying. 'Tis true, your loss is great; your sorrow at parting is unspeakable. But this certainly comforts you, to know that "our loss is her gain." Your dear mother who lived unto Him who died for her, she is, according to the soul, with her Savior, and though we now lay her body to rest in God's acre, yet it shall not remain there. On the day appointed by God she shall come forth unto a glorious resurrection. It would have been a great boon if here with you she could have celebrated Thanksgiving day, but think of it that her hymns of praise and of thanksgiving will nevermore be interrupted. Oh no, we would not ask her back to this uncertain and evil world. Accept this word of comfort from your Lord, and pray Him that you also may always be able to say, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

And you, her many friends, you were impressed with the sweetness of her disposition, her loyalty to her God and to her husband,

her cheerful and yet decided manner. Do you know the secret of it? It lay in this that she could say, "To me to live is Christ." Can you say that? Think well of it, for your end draweth nigh. We have here no continuing city. Do you wish your death to be gain? Come to Him who has said: "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." With her it is well, wherefore we repeat what we said in the beginning of our discourse:

One less on earth,
Its pain, its sorrow, and its toil to share.
One less the pilgrim's daily cross to bear;
One more the crown of ransomed souls to wear—
At home in heaven.

Amen.

M. S. S.

Outlines for Sermons on the Gospel-Lessons.

Fifth Sunday after Easter.

JOHN 16, 23—30.

Christ recommends and even commands prayer in this Gospel. He that does not pray is not a true Christian. He despises God's will and command which is set forth not only in our Gospel, but also in other parts of the Bible: Ps. 50, 15. 1 Thess. 5, 17. 1 Tim. 2, 1. Matt. 5, 44. Even without the divine revelation, by the mere light of Nature, we know that we should worship God and bow before Him in prayer. Jews, Turks, and heathen offer prayers to their false gods, and sometimes do so with a regularity and consistency that puts many Christians to shame.—There is, in fact, but one class of men that can pray and do pray rightly. That class is composed of all the true Christians in all parts of the world. Praying is something which is done by the true Christians alone.

THE PRAYING CHRISTIAN.

We shall consider,

- I. *That the true Christian alone CAN pray;*
- II. *That the true Christian WILL and MUST pray.*

I.

a. What prayer is. A correct definition of prayer may be gathered from v. 23. Prayer is α . an address to the true God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Triune God. A so-called prayer which is not addressed to the true God, but to some false god, is no prayer. β . It is an address to God in Jesus' name, an appeal to God that He should grant us our requests not in our own name, not because of our own worthiness, but for His mercy's sake which He has manifested in His beloved Son Jesus Christ. A true prayer, is a prayer in the faith, a prayer in which we admit our sinfulness and come to our God trusting in His grace for Jesus' sake. γ . But if only that is a true prayer which is made in Jesus' name, how are

we to understand the seeming censure which Jesus applied to His disciples v. 24? Had the disciples not offered a true prayer before this? Had not Jesus taught them to pray and given them the Lord's Prayer? Certainly, the disciples had prayed rightly. But to comprehend Christ's words we must consider His own explanation, vv. 25. 26a. These words plainly show that it was not exactly meant for a censure when Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name," but that He merely meant to *state the fact*. The fact was that Jesus had not yet completed the work of the redemption, and not before His great work was finished and the Holy Ghost was poured out upon them, could the disciples pray in Jesus' name. They could pray rightly without praying in Jesus' name while Jesus was with them, but ever since Jesus has left this world and gone to the Father, all the true children of God have prayed in Jesus' name, and this alone is a true prayer.

b. The true Christians alone can pray. They alone can address the true God. Others cannot pray to the true God because they know Him not; and their addresses to their imaginary gods are but a mockery of prayer. The true Christians alone can ask in Jesus' name, for they alone truly believe in the Savior Jesus, find comfort in His vicarious suffering and death, and approach God with confidence in His love. Their ability to pray is God's work in them.

II.

The power and ability to pray does not remain with the Christian unused. Three things connect him with prayer and render it impossible for him to live without prayer.

a. His living faith which seeks union with God, vv. 26—28. After the day of Pentecost the disciples were no longer to be backward as they were now, but, inspired with faith, they were to pray to the Father; not leave it to Jesus alone to pray for them, though He also would intercede for them, moreover, pray themselves. And how fervently did the disciples pray after Pentecost! Acts 2, 42. 47. 4, 24—33.—Do you feel such a desire to pray and to commune with your God? By your prayers you can test your own faith. "No prayer, no faith; little prayer, little faith; much prayer, great faith."

b. God's will and command, v. 24b. The devil, the world, and our flesh continually throw obstacles in our way to keep us from praying in the house of God and in our own homes. Sunday picnics and Sunday outings on a fine summer day keep many from coming to the house of the Lord to pray, and in many homes family worship is neglected. Remember that you are enjoined by divine command to pray, and do better with the aid of God's Holy Spirit, if you have been neglectful.

c. God's promise that our prayers will be heard. Jesus says, "Ask, and ye shall receive." At another occasion He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc. Matt. 7, 7. 8. This promise is given to all true believers, also to those who deem themselves strong in the faith, but in truth are weak, vv. 29. 30. A prayer in Jesus' name submits to the will of God, and such a prayer is always heard.

H. S.